

Planning Effective Public Meetings



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The Six P's

1. Purpose

Why are we holding this meeting?

2. Product

What will this meeting produce?

3. People

Who needs to be present and what do they need to participate effectively?

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The Six P's

4. Place

Where will the meeting be held, what environment needs to be created?

5. Presentations

What information will be needed and how will it be presented?

6. Process

How will we conduct the meeting?

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1. Purpose

- What is the "Value Added?"
- Be clear about the purpose
- Show how this meeting fits into to overall process
- Relate directly to stakeholder concerns
- Frame key questions appropriately
- Communicate clearly in advance

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2. Product

- Possible outcomes can include:
 - Shared learning
 - Information
 - Input
 - Relationships
 - Identify Public Values
 - Create Consensus
 - Areas of agreement

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Discussion Table Page 2

- Look at the purposes of public meetings and determine if they are worth the effort of a public meeting?
- What circumstances are we conducting public meetings where they might not be the best form of engagement?

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3. People

- Identify all key voices that need to be there
- Try to repair relationships before the meeting or event, it won't happen at the meeting itself
- Make the meeting meaningful
- Go out and get folks to come



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4. Place: Address Public Needs



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Location and Room Setup

- Meet on their turf,
- Flexible seating, facing each other
- No head table
- All materials visible
- Good sound
- Real-time note-taking
- Plenty of materials
- Food



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Location and Room Setup

- Child care
- Transportation
- Post results on walls
- Post the groundrules and agenda
- Post key information and/or handouts
- Good signage
- Greeters



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5. Presentations

- Participatory attitude is essential
- ID what people need to know
- Remember the communications model



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Recognize How People Learn

- People don't learn all at once
- Consider your stakeholders' filters
- Start where they are
- Plan around the input that you are seeking



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Use a Variety of Tools

- Try to be interactive
- Anticipate key questions
- Use small groups
- Encourage dialogue
- Avoid long, dry presentations
- Use examples, stories, models, and visuals to enhance understanding



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A few more things

- Practice
- Be fully transparent
- Teach participation
- Leave a legacy



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6. Process

- Create Effective Dialogue



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Key elements of Effective Dialogue

- Values level exploration
- Jointly explore alternatives
- Two-way communication
- Listening to understand
- Good information
- Trust
- Common goal
- Shared knowledge base
- Enough time



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Table Discussions

- Discuss the elements of effective dialogue and how public meeting in Arlington are creating dialogue, why or why not?

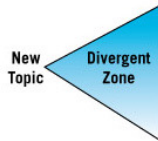
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Process, Establish Objectives

- Relationships
- Learning
- Dialogue
- Common Ground
- Agreements

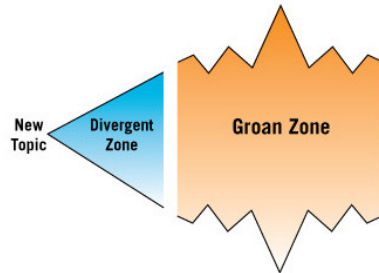
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Stages of Agreement



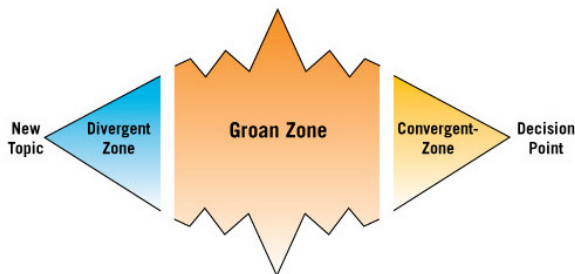
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Stages of Agreement



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Stages of Agreement



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Process, Create the Agenda

- The meeting is a journey that you create, the agenda is the map
- Be flexible, side trips are often important
- Be realistic about participant needs and behaviors
- Focus on the checkpoints you are trying to reach, not the times

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1. Groundrules

- Agreements about behavior
- Set expectations and allow correction
- Relevant to issue and audience
- Identified up front
- Agreed to by all participants
- Short, direct, and specific
- No more than 5 or 6

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Behaviors to Monitor

- Civility
- Respect
- Listening
- Cooperation
- Agreement

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Example Groundrules

- We are here to share information, not make decisions
- We will help each other to understand issues and concerns
- We will attack issues, never people
- We will respect everyone's right to speak
- We will hold one conversation at a time



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Establishing and Enforcing Groundrules

- Propose draft groundrules
- Get verbal acknowledgment
- Resolve barriers to full consensus
- Post the ground rules
- Correct bad behavior early
- Refer back to them as necessary



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2. Facilitative Behaviors

- Humility
- Patience
- Flexibility
- Empathy
- Respect
- Energy
- Humor



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3. Capture Results

- Keep Track of the Conversation
- Identify Agreements
- Close and Summarize



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Exercise: Design a Public Meeting

- Identify purpose and products
- Identify who should be there
- Create a detailed approach and agenda
- Identify the information that must be presented and ideas for making it effective
- Identify draft ground rules
- Other key considerations to make the meeting a success



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